

# Labor party welcomes suspension order against teacher recruiter

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MANILA, Philippines—The labor partylist group Partido ng Manggagawa (PM) welcomes the issuance by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) of a preventive suspension against the recruitment agencies accused by local and US-based Filipino teachers of defrauding and exploiting them.

In an order dated November 19, 2009, the POEA by motu proprio suspended the operation of PARS International Placement Agency and Universal Placement International, recruitment agencies which had been the subject of several complaints by many teachers both here and in the US. The suspension order is for POEA Cases No. RV 09-10-2258 / DAE 09-10-1873/ RV 09-11-2373 / DAE 09-11-1932 lodged by several teachers against the two agencies.

The two agencies have been accused of over-charging their clients of placement and other fees and contract violations, among others. (see attached CaseInfoSheet)

The Quezon City-based PARS is owned by Emilio V. Villarba while the Los Angeles based UPI is owned by a certain Lourdes Navarro. These two entities, according to the case profile prepared by Louisiana-based Filipino teachers and the liaison officer of Partido ng Manggagawa in the US, are owned and operated by one family. Villarba and Navarro are siblings. The former is in charged with the recruitment in Philippines.

The suspension order came on the same day two more Louisiana-based Filipino teachers, Mairi Tanedo and Geralyn Bacus, filed their formal complaints against the agency at the POEA. Tanedo and Bacus were both deployed for a one year contract at the East Baton Rouge Parish School System in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Some 250 teachers were deployed through these placement agencies in Louisiana alone.

“We view this as partial victory for our teachers, but sweet victory no less. And this was made possible with the courage and solid determination by our teachers to exact justice from crooked but well-connected recruiters,” said PM Secretary General Judy Ann Miranda.

The labor party believes that with the sanctions imposed against the PARS and UPI, more of its victims would surely come forward to pursue their cases.

But according to Tanedo and Bacus, after having talks with some POEA officials, the suspension order can be easily lifted soon after the agencies submit their counter claims. They hope, however, that their separate complaints will cause another suspension. The two teachers said they are also waiting for the notarized copy of some 60 more complaints coming from the US, which they believe could finally nail down these two agencies.

The Partido ng Manggagawa and the Public Services Independent Confederation (PSLINK) are also preparing to lodge their own complaints.

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) also had taken up the campaign for the Filipino teachers by filing separate cases against the UPI before the US Department of Labor for several violations of labor and non-immigrant program laws. (see attached AFT Filing)

Tanedo and Bacus, in coordination with PM and PSLINK, are now organizing the linkages between the US-based teachers and their families here as well as with other teachers who were not able to leave the country but were already defrauded by PARS.

They will hold a press conference together with other victims of PARS in Cebu sometime next week.

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